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SHE SWORE SHE'D NEVER
BE A TEACHER, SO.....

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You'd always find someone you were looking for sitting on the courthouse steps. I'd walk over and ask and they'd say, 'He's right here,' and there, in front of God and everyone, I'd be asking about the support check he hadn't paid for his child."

In 1950 and 1951, Miss Quarles lived at the University of Kentucky where she did the course work for a M.A. in sociology. She returned to Leslie County in 1952 to do a study of the differences between families

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MISS MARY ANN Quarles came to Rhode Island College by way of the Kentucky mountains, the CIA and a New Jersey reformatory.

Today, she is something she swore she would never be—a teacher. But besides being an assistant professor of sociology, she is an authority on penology, the science of the treatment and rehabilitation of criminals.

A summer job while she was still a student at Mt. Holyoke College led indirectly to social work. Miss Quarles worked in an American Friends Service work camp in Leslie County, Ky. A year after graduating from college, Miss Quarles answered an ad for a job with the Frontier Nursing Service there.

An urban person will have difficulty picturing Leslie County. A few facts may help. Between 1931 and 1933, the first paved road was built connecting the county seat, Hyden, with the nearby mining center of Hazard. There was only one highway through the county until 1945 when another road connecting Lexington with Harlan was constructed. Then coal mines, which had been operating intermittently in the mountains since World War I, opened up in Leslie County. There followed a period of brief prosperity and transition.

Miss Quarles, a native of New Jersey, moved to Leslie County in 1948. "I was fortunate to work there when many services were expanded or became available for the first time," she said. "It was a matter of exploring."

The Frontier Nursing Service is what its name implies. Its founder, Miss Mary Breckinridge, was interested primarily in helping children, but believed that you had to start before they were born. The service is best known for midwifery.

Leslie County has the highest birth rate of any county in the United States. This has been true for several recent censuses. Miss Quarles suggested a possible explanation, since the rate is only slightly higher than in neighboring Clay County.

"The majority of babies are delivered by the Frontier Nurses and they're very careful about birth records." Midwives, who deliver many rural babies, are not.

Part of Miss Quarles' work was concerned with family assistance. "That meant emergency grocery orders for families who couldn't get on the welfare soon enough," said Miss Quarles with a smile. The welfare is a way of life in an area where the only means of livelihood and subsistence farming, a little lumbering and working for the state. Miss Quarles said that the schools were the largest employer in the county. Mines, never more than marginal there, are now either totally automated or defunct.

Miss Quarles also got medical help for children. "Sometimes I'd pile seven kids into a station wagon and take them to the Children's Hospital in Cincinnati."

And she did some child welfare work, but cases of child abuse or neglect are rare in the Kentucky mountains. The family is a strong unit there and, wherever people farm, additional children are an asset.

"We'd get letters from people wanting to adopt children," said Miss Quarles. "They'd heard that there were lots around. Before 1950, when the child welfare laws were changed in the state, the county judges would hear about a child and just make out the papers and give the child away."

"The judge would call me up and say, 'I've got a boy in here. Come over and help me.' I'd go over with our lawyer and we'd try to explain that you just didn't give kids out like that."

Social work, in practice, was very different from what it appeared to be in the classroom. "There you talk about ideal conditions, about seeing people in your office, came to my office, I'd have to go track the person down."

who lived along the highways and those who lived "up the creek." The highway had changed the pattern of life in the county.

Miss Quarles is a long way from the Kentucky mountains now, but she is interested, and somewhat dubious, about what can be done in the way of introducing industry into the area.

After a brief stint with the CIA ("I didn't like it at all. I'm not made up to be a counterespionage"), Miss Quarles returned to Kentucky but not to Leslie County. ("I had become very Kentucky-oriented.")

She worked for six months at Kentucky Village, a reform school, then taught for three years at Berea College, a college for students from the Appalachians. "That got me started in teaching."

She went on to make some remarks about Berea which is a rather unusual place because of its student body. "There was more honest-to-God academic freedom there than anywhere I've ever been."

While there was academic freedom, neither students nor faculty could smoke or drink. Miss Quarles led a smoking crusade. "It split the faculty. And we spent too much time talking about smoking and not enough time on academic things." Today, smoking, but not drinking, is permitted.

From Berea, Miss Quarles, still undecided about whether to go on teaching, went to work at the New Jersey Reformatory for Women. After three years there, she decided to get her Ph.D. and continue teaching. "I felt I could make a better contribution to the field by teaching. I'm not cut out to be a lady warden."

Miss Quarles' field is the treatment and rehabilitation of criminals. "The public has such a distorted image of prisons." She hopes to educate her students about the subject and perhaps convince a few to work in the field. "She had a few things to say about Rhode Island's

penal system. "Your maximum security prison is the most relaxed I've ever been in and that's really something. You know what they're doing. Of course, Rhode Island is smaller than most states so you have an advantage."

"You should do away with the women's prison. There are only 18 or 20 prisoners. It takes twice as much staff. Of course, it's great that you aren't putting more away. It shows that the probation services must be good. You know that there are more than 18 women in the state who sin."

Her dissertation for Boston University, which she hopes to complete by next year, deals with the development of the treatment program at the New Jersey Reformatory for Women over the past 50 years. As it is a woman's institution, its emphasis has always been rehabilitation and treatment rather than custody and punishment. Women's penal institutions are usually more advanced than men's.

"The public isn't afraid of women," laughed Miss Quarles. "We're protected by our homes, men and society. There's a theory, but it's just a theory, that women are criminally more dangerous than men. But chivalry isn't dead yet."